The Children’s Radio Foundation was incorporated in the US in 2006 as a 501(c)(3), registered as a charity with the UK Charity Commission in 2010, and listed as a non-profit organization in South Africa in 2012.

Photography: Sydelle Willow Smith, Makhulu, UNICEF, Ley Owena & Mzinga Mvundika
Dear Friends,

Last year will forever be etched in our memories as a year that upended just about everything. While COVID-19 charted a remarkably different course from country to country, most of us spent much of 2020 worrying about how the pandemic would affect our livelihoods, our families, our communities, and our future. As the circumstances constantly shifted we were challenged, time and time again, to adapt to new realities.

When lockdowns began across the globe, we moved swiftly into action to equip our youth reporters with the tools and skills to reach their communities with critical information about COVID-19. We created weekly fact sheets to reflect the most up-to-date information and held digital training workshops to support our reporters and radio station partners. We developed new systems for reporting remotely and guidelines to keep safe. We trained youth to identify and respond to fake news and misinformation about COVID-19.

We made sure not to neglect the voices of youth in our COVID-19 radio broadcasts. For millions of young people across Africa, many of whom endure poverty, unemployment, and limited opportunities, COVID-19 is a source of trauma in already stressful environments. The pandemic wreaked havoc on African economies, leading to a rise in unemployment in many sectors. Since most young people in Africa do not have consistent access to the internet, school closures meant they had little or no means of learning. The effects of isolation are known to disproportionately impact young people. Our youth reporters identified mental health as a key issue for young people, and broadcast “youth pandemic diaries” to help listeners realize they are not alone in their experiences.

2020 has been a year of difficulty, adaptation, and growth for all of us, but we are happy to report that we have not stopped dreaming. We will continue to galvanize the inspiring stories and voices of young Africans that our reporters capture so well.

Stay tuned and stay with us - none of it would be possible without you.

With gratitude and much enthusiasm for shaping the future.
OUR MISSION AND VISION

A simple idea inspires the Children’s Radio Foundation: If young people are given the tools and skills to express their ideas and share their stories, they will be able to access a world of wider opportunities.

The Children’s Radio Foundation uses radio to create opportunities for youth-led dialogue, participation, leadership, and active citizenship in communities across Africa.

Our work is guided by a vision of young people shaping their own futures and strengthening themselves, their families, and their communities.

Since its founding by Elizabeth Sachs in 2006, the Children’s Radio Foundation has created a network of more than 3,500 trained youth radio reporters across five countries in Africa, who broadcast on local and national radio stations and via social media.

ISSUES ADDRESSED BY OUR REPORTERS

WHY RADIO?

RADIO IS AFRICA'S FIRST CHOICE
Even with the growth of digital media, radio is still by far the most common source of news and information across Africa.

RADIO IS EASY TO LEARN
With ongoing mentoring, young people are able to learn production and broadcasting skills quickly.

RADIO SKILLS ARE LIFE SKILLS
Learning how to interview, research and produce a radio show empowers youth, and builds their confidence, communication skills and critical thinking.

RADIO IS PORTABLE
Radio can follow you from place to place – wherever you are and whatever you are doing.

RADIO REACHES THE HARD-TO-REACH
Radio is the only form of media in many remote, isolated places. It broadcasts where newspapers and television signals do not reach.

RADIO BUILDS COMMUNITY
Radio reflects the concerns of the day and speaks to local realities. It is a dialogue starter and an information hub.

YOUTH RADIO PROJECTS ARE INEXPENSIVE
Radio reaches an audience of millions in a cost-effective way.
Deforestation for urban development

YOUTH DISCOVER ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS THROUGH RADIO

In Mtendere, on the outskirts of Lusaka, Towela Nyirenda walks around a gigantic, uprooted tree that blocks off traffic. This is a common sight on Alick Nkhata Road, which cuts through a neighborhood under construction in one of southern Africa’s fastest growing cities. The tree, cleared to make way for a new housing development, will be chopped up by vendors and sold on the side of the road as firewood to make charcoal.

Towela knows that because of the constant power cuts, Zambians will continue to rely heavily on charcoal burning for cooking and heating. But with that reliance comes massive deforestation, which harms the soil, makes the land susceptible to floods, and affects food production. She wants to find out what locals think about charcoal burning and its effects, and to get a sense of how Zambians can work together to create a more sustainable future.

Towela has always been passionate about the environment, but she says she didn’t have the confidence to speak out until she was trained as a youth reporter at the age of 15. “This is when I got to know that there are problems that could be solved through interaction, and that there are problems that could be solved by me, when I just take that step, which I did.”

Through funding from the KR Foundation, the Children’s Radio Foundation has set up youth radio programs that address climate change at 50 stations in five countries, supporting youth reporters to capture the local impact of the climate emergency across Africa. The radio shows Towela produces with her peers bring local contexts to the forefront while informing listeners of the scale of the problem.

At the market in Mtendere, she interviews vendors as they unload bags of charcoal from a truck. They tell her how selling charcoal puts food on the table, but how it is getting more and more difficult to make a living from it. Towela hears that farmers are suffering as their crops fail. In these conversations, Towela shares information about new and inexpensive cooking devices that are climate friendly, and helps community members understand how climate change is affecting Zambia. These are the real world perspectives that Towela will bring back with her to the radio studio and share with her listeners, in efforts to inspire her community to come up with sustainable solutions together.

Radio in the time of social distancing

YOUTH REPORTERS RE-IMAGINE RADIO BROADCASTING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Radio is life for Monde Ndelu. Reporting and broadcasting allow him to tap into his creative self, while doing his part to inform and uplift his community. Monde began his radio career as a youth reporter at age 17. Five years later, he now mentors a group of reporters. What he loves about radio is its intimacy and how it lets him connect with the people in his community and understand their lives. Each week, Monde and 15 young Vibe FM reporters take to the streets of KwaMashu, a township just outside Durban, South Africa, to cover issues that affect their community and broadcast shows that cater to youth audiences.

When COVID-19 forced South Africa into lockdown, Monde and his team developed new ways to bond with one another and to connect with their listeners. Production meetings were carried out over the phone, interviews were recorded as voice notes—the team designed their own version of a virtual newsroom. “We had to create pre-recorded shows, which took some getting used to since there was no live interaction with our followers and our listeners.”

For 27 consecutive weeks, youth reporters and listeners from across our pan-African network submitted questions about COVID-19 to our team, who in turn provided reliable answers. Working with public health specialists, we created weekly factsheets to reflect the constantly shifting landscape, which were shared through social media and the Children’s Radio Foundation website. Getting answers to their probing questions better prepared our reporters to inform their communities and dispel myths and conspiracy theories that quickly began to take root. The Isanda FM youth reporters explained the connection between hygiene and health in a public service announcement on the importance of handwashing.

Reflecting on the first year of the pandemic, Monde recognizes the resilience of his team to embrace a new way of working, of utilizing technology to create the close connection to community that is so critical to their success. As the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in South Africa begins to reach more people, he knows there is a need for continued dialogue that can respond to a new set of community concerns.

“We had to create pre-recorded shows, which took some getting used to since there was no live interaction with our followers and our listeners.”

Monde Ndelu
Kwamashu, South Africa

WE HAD TO CREATE PRE-RECORDED SHOWS, WHICH TOOK SOME GETTING USED TO SINCE THERE WAS NO LIVE INTERACTION WITH OUR FOLLOWERS AND OUR LISTENERS.”

Monde Ndelu
Kwamashu, South Africa
Securing the mental health of youth

A NEW YOUTH RADIO PROJECT OPENS UP SAFE SPACES TO SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLNESS

18-year-old youth reporter Logan Hansen has watched many of her peers suffer in silence from mental health challenges, but she never felt that she had the right words to talk to them about it. Logan's community, Atlantis, is a suburb of Cape Town, South Africa. It was established in 1970 by the Apartheid Government as an industrial center and a segregated community classified under the Group Areas Act. Today, Atlantis faces issues of unemployment, inadequate housing, and high levels of crime still prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa. Our youth reporters at Radio Atlantis and across South Africa called attention to the need for radio programs around mental health that can help young people to confront this complex topic and to identify when and where to seek professional help.

In the midst of the pandemic, a time of unprecedented stress and trauma for South African youth, radio answered their call. With support from the Emerging Markets Foundation and the Alexander Mosley Charitable Trust, we partnered with two dynamic youth organizations, Brave Girl and Khululeka Grief Support, to launch Youth Voices on Mental Health, a radio program and digital campaign. We hosted two training workshops in Cape Town, bringing youth and mental health experts together in conversation to better understand young people's knowledge of and concerns around mental health. As a result of the workshop, Logan says she now feels confident talking about mental health with her peers "being educated on the topic allows me to communicate better and to understand and recognize depression or anxiety in others."

Through this collaborative project, we are developing materials and tools for youth dialogues on mental health that will underpin all of our youth radio work. We will roll out the program across South Africa and to our youth radio networks across the continent. The intended impact is for youth to feel supported, for mental health challenges to be normalized, and to build the support systems that young people need as they navigate their transition into adulthood.
STARTING A MOVEMENT WITH MICROPHONES IN HAND

Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, was once called Kin La Belle, or Kinshasa, the beautiful. Now many of the city’s 17 million residents refer to it as Kin La Poubelle, or Kinshasa, the trash can. Youth reporter Tony Biduaya says the city is overflowing with garbage everywhere he looks. He and his fellow youth reporters from the local Children’s Radio Foundation project site set out to understand why waste management seems to be getting worse each year. Microphones in hand, they started by paying a visit to Kapela Market in the Yolo-sud neighbourhood of Kinshasa, to find out how community members were affected by it.

Despite paying a daily tax, of which 15% is intended to upkeep the sanitation of the market, vendors at Kapela hadn’t seen their money put to good use in months, and had eventually come to accept their circumstances. Trash littered the aisles of the market and after the rain, the unpaved walkways turned to mud, which would begin to stink as soon as the first rays of sun came out.

Tony and his group of 15 fellow youth reporters broadcast to 1.5 million listeners each week, raising awareness on climate change and environmental issues. Their reporting from Kapela forced the market administration to be accountable and waste collection activities resumed a few weeks later. Now all the vendors at Kapela are involved in maintaining the market. Tony said he learned how to influence people’s behavior through being a youth reporter, and that small actions in one’s own community can make a huge difference.

“RADIO HAS LET ME EXPOSE THE ISSUES FACED BY MY LOCAL COMMUNITY AND TO LOOK FOR SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS. WE SEE PEOPLE CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR, AND SOME EVEN CONGRATULATE US FOR THE GREAT WORK WE’RE DOING FOR THE COMMUNITY.”

TONY
KINSHASA, DRC

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN DRC
CHILDREN’S RADIO FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2020
Radio creates a no judgment zone

ZAMBIAN YOUTH OPEN MINDS ON TABOO TOPICS ACROSS THE AIRWAVES

Youth reporter Wantula Simboye admits that he used to judge teenage girls who become pregnant and that he saw reproductive health as a topic that didn’t concern him as a young man. Zambia has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa, with rates of child marriage some of the highest in the world. Wantula believes that cultural and religious conservatism in the country makes it difficult to have open and honest conversations around these issues. Over the past three years, he has been doing his part through The Voice Radio Show in Lusaka.

Wantula is an active participant in our Future Positive initiative. Working in partnership with schools, clinics and community based organizations across the communities where we work in South Africa and Zambia, youth learn about and produce radio shows on important and sensitive topics including sex and sexuality, HIV and AIDS, contraception, cervical cancer, male circumcision, and gender-based violence. Wantula says that these subjects are rarely discussed with young people, and adults make important decisions around their health without informing or consulting them.

“HAVING BEEN PART OF THIS PROJECT, I UNDERSTAND THE TOPIC OF TEEN PREGNANCY AND OTHER ISSUES YOUNG PEOPLE FACE, ESPECIALLY GIRLS, WHO ARE THE MOST VULNERABLE.”

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, caused gatherings to be suspended, Wantula and his fellow youth reporters regularly hosted community events to raise awareness and to spark intergenerational dialogues on these taboo topics.

“MANY YOUNG PEOPLE WHO TUNE IN TO OUR SHOWS CALL OR TEXT TO SHARE THEIR VIEWS. THE FEEDBACK HAS BEEN AMAZING AND ADULTS HAVE ALSO BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE. THOUGH OUR MAIN TARGET AUDIENCE ARE THE YOUTH, WE GET ENCOURAGED WHEN RECEIVING FEEDBACK FROM THE ADULT LISTENERS.”

Despite the interest in the radio shows they have garnered, Wantula says not all adults in their community have responded favorably. The youth use the negative comments as fuel to continue producing shows because they realize that change happens over time. Wantula imagines a future where everyone can freely express their views on issues of sexual reproductive health and rights without feeling at all judged. He understands that if young people are given the power of information, then they can make better choices for themselves.

“KNOWING THAT I AM PART OF THE SOLUTION HAS BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN MY LIFE, AND KNOWING THAT EVERY TIME I AM ON RADIO WITH MY FELLOW YOUTH REPORTERS, WE ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE REDUCTION OF THESE CASES IS THE MOST AMAZING FEELING EVER.”
IN MEMORIAM
NONJABULO MWELASE

In April 2021, youth reporter Nonjabulo Mwelase lost her life at the tender age of 20 due to stroke-related complications. She was put to her final resting place in May, ending a short life dedicated to combating HIV stigma.

Nonjabulo was 13 years old when she joined the Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa, an organization that gives psycho-social support to families and specifically to orphans affected by HIV/AIDS.

That was the beginning of her 7 year journey to campaign bravely for youth-friendly health services in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Nonjabulo used her voice to campaign against HIV stigma in global HIV conferences such as the 2018 AIDS Impact and the 21st International AIDS Conference in Durban. Her friends at the Sinomlando Centre miss her commitment, humour and warm smile.
WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO SUPPORTED OUR WORK IN 2020

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We would like to convey our sincere thanks to Simon Well and Nick Bowers, who both stepped down from their roles as trustees of our UK Board at the end of 2020. In 2008, Simon Well was one of five founding trustees, offering the legal stewardship necessary to achieve UK charity status. Nick Bowers joined the UK board in 2015 and served as Chair from 2017-2020.

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PARTNERS AND FUNDERS
### FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2020

#### INCOME ($)

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<th></th>
<th>UK 2020</th>
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<th>USA 2020</th>
<th>Consolidation adjustments</th>
<th>Combined 2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
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<td>Individuals</td>
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<td>777,759</td>
<td>599,558</td>
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#### EXPENSES ($)

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<td>All Expenses</td>
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<td>899,943</td>
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#### ASSETS

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<td>231,077</td>
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#### EQUITY & LIABILITIES ($)

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<th>USA 2020</th>
<th>Consolidation adjustments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Liabilities</td>
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<td>27,917</td>
<td>129,868</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>231,077</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**OUR EFFICIENCY**

- **10%** Administrative Expenses
- **90%** Program Expenses

---

**IN 2020 WE SURPASSED OUR TARGET OPERATING RATIO OF 80:20 PROGRAM TO ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.**

---

**NOTE**

Led by certified accounting firms in their respective countries, South Africa has completed its audit, and the US finances are currently undergoing their own. United Kingdom numbers have undergone an independent examination compliant with UK Charity Commission requirements.

---

**RASHID MWANZA, TANZANIA**
CHILDREN’S RADIO FOUNDATION
INTERNATIONAL TEAM

“IT IS LIKE I WAS SITTING IN THE STANDS AND NOW I AM STANDING ON THE STAGE. THE LIGHTS ARE ON, AND I NEED TO SHOW PEOPLE WHAT I AM CAPABLE OF.”

MONDE NDELU
YOUTH MENTOR